



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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INSPECTOR GENERAL

October 15, 2021

John Leonard, Community and Legislative Affairs Manager
City of West Hollywood
City Hall
8300 Santa Monica Boulevard
West Hollywood, CA 90069-6216

Dear Mr. Leonard:

Thank you for your letter dated October 8, 2021, requesting that the Office of Inspector General work with the Contract Cities Association to audit the contracts of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff's Department) for all contract cities. Allegations of fraud in county public safety contracts and falsification of county records are appropriately matters of grave concern to all cities which contract with the Sheriff's Department. As set forth below, my attempt to discharge my duties in this matter has been obstructed by Sheriff Villanueva. The county is pursuing legal remedies to compel Sheriff Villanueva to comply with California law.


The Office of Inspector General received information regarding allegations of falsification of county records in Compton before the matter was widely known publicly. My staff promptly contacted the Sheriff's Department and invoked Government Code section 25303 (Supervision of Conduct of Officers) and Los Angeles County Code section 6.44.190(i) which require county employees to cooperate with Inspector General investigations in the manner directed, in this case on-site review of relevant records. Apparently faced with the choice of complying with the law or following the orders of Sheriff Villanueva, employees of the Sheriff's Department chose to follow orders.

In March of this year, after the Captain of Compton station and the Contract Law Enforcement Bureau (CLEB) refused to allow an on-site review, the Office of Inspector General was informed by Sheriff's Department command staff that the documents and information pertinent to the fraud allegations were provided to the Sheriff's Audit and Accountability Bureau (AAB). While the AAB confirmed it was conducting an audit/inquiry into the allegations and was in possession of the documents from Compton Station and CLEB, AAB refused to provide us with any documents or information until the completion of its audit/inquiry. The unmonitored transfer of these documents from the Compton station and CLEB to the Sheriff's AAB, makes it unlikely that the Office of Inspector General will be able to confirm or disprove the allegations of fraud independently.

The Sheriff's Department's violation of state law in concealing county records from independent review is part of an ongoing effort by Sheriff Villanueva to obstruct this office in its duties. The County of Los Angeles continues to litigate the Sheriff's refusal to comply with transparency laws. That litigation includes enforcing the Sheriff's refusal to comply with a subpoena issued in this office's ongoing inquiry into deputy gangs.¹ Newly enacted Penal Code section 13670 specifically provides that law enforcement agencies "cooperate in any investigation of these gangs by an inspector general." We are also pursuing formal legal process inquiring into the Sheriff's possible ongoing violation of Penal Code section 518, a subject of recent public reporting.²

Unfortunately, the Sheriff's Department has already provided critical evidence regarding its contract performance by preventing independent review of allegations of fraud and falsification of records. Until the county succeeds in reestablishing fundamental rules of lawful government in the Sheriff's Department, the City of West Hollywood and other contract cities will have to protect themselves as best they can through contract negotiations and the courts.

Sincerely,



Max Huntsman
Inspector General

MH:dw

c: County Board of Supervisors
Alex Villanueva, Sheriff
Fesia Davenport, Chief Executive Officer
Celia Zavala, Executive Officer
Rodrigo Castro-Silva, County Counsel
Brian K. Williams, Executive Director, Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission

¹ Newly enacted Penal Code section 13670 will take effect January 1, 2022 to confirm the duty of inspectors general to identify law enforcement gangs, including those which discriminate in membership based on race and gender, and specifically provides that law enforcement agencies "cooperate in any investigation of these gangs by an inspector general."

²Alene Tchekmedyan, *L.A. County sheriff's unit accused of targeting political enemies, vocal critics*, Los Angeles Times (September 23, 2021) <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-09-23/sheriff-alex-villanueva-secret-police> and *Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission Memorandum from Commissioner Sean Kennedy Re: Villanueva administration's investigation of oversight officials, etc.* (May 27, 2021) http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/LASDInvestigationsofOversightOfficials_SKMemotoCOC_5.27.2021.pdf.